

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1.-24. (Cancelled).

25. (Currently Amended) A seal element for use in a packer deployed in a well, comprising:

a support sleeve;

a sealing layer at least partially enclosing the support sleeve; and

a tube comprising slots, the tube adapted to radially extend against the support sleeve in response to the tube being axially compressed to press the sealing layer against a wall enclosing the packer to establish a sealing contact between the sealing layer and the wall.

26. (Previously Presented) The seal element of claim 25, wherein the slots comprise helical slots.

27. (Previously Presented) The seal element of claim 25, wherein the tube is adapted to expand when compressed axially.

28.-30. (Cancelled)

31. (Previously Presented) A seal element usable with a packer, comprising:

a support sleeve;

a sealing layer at least partially enclosing the support sleeve;

a bow adapted to remain retracted while the packer is run into a well and radially extend against the support sleeve to press the sealing layer against a wall that encloses the packer to form a sealing contact between the sealing layer and the wall; and

a wedge adapted to engage the bow to radially extend the bow.

32. (New) The seal element of claim 25, further comprising at least one additional tube comprising slots located radially outside of the first tube.

33. (New) A method usable with a well, comprising:
providing a packer comprising a support sleeve, a sealing layer at least partially enclosing the support sleeve and a tube comprising slots; and
radially expanding the tube against the support sleeve in response to the tube being axially compressed to press the sealing layer against a wall enclosing the packer to establish a sealing contact between the sealing layer and the wall.

34. (New) The method of claim 33, wherein the act of providing comprises providing a packer comprising a tube comprising helical slots.

35. (New) The method of claim 33, wherein the act of providing comprises providing a packer comprising a tube comprising slots that extend generally axially with respect to a longitudinal axis of the tube.

36. (New) The method of claim 33, further comprising forming multiple slotted tube layers, said tube comprising slots being one of the multiple slotted tube layers.

37. (New) A seal element usable with a packer, comprising:
a support sleeve;
a sealing layer at least partially enclosing the support sleeve;
a bow having an inner surface and an outer surface; and
a moveable element adapted to extend radially inside the bow to contact the inner surface of the bow to cause the bow to radially extend outwardly against the support sleeve such that the outer surface of the bow presses the sealing layer against a wall that encloses the packer to form a sealing contact between the sealing layer and the wall.

38. (New) The seal element of claim 37, wherein the moveable element comprises a wedge.

39. (New) The seal element of claim 37, wherein the bow is adapted to elastically deform in response to contacting the support sleeve to store mechanical energy to keep the sealing layer in sealing contact with the wall.

40. (New) A method usable with a well, comprising:
providing a packer having a seal element, a support sleeve, a sealing layer at least partially enclosing the support sleeve and a moveable element; and
moving the moveable member radially inside the bow to contact an inner surface of the bow to cause the bow to radially extend outwardly against the support sleeve to press the sealing layer against a wall that encloses the packer to form a sealing contact between the sealing layer and the wall.

41 (New) The method of claim 40, wherein the act of moving comprises moving a wedge radially inside the bow.

42. (New) The method of claim 40, further comprising elastically deforming the bow in response to the bow contacting the support sleeve to store mechanical energy to keep the sealing layer in sealing contact with the wall.

43. (New) A seal element for use in a packer comprising:
an energizing element adapted to store potential energy prior to the packer being run to a predetermined position in a well;
a sealing layer covering at least a portion of the energizing element; and
a mechanism adapted to hold the energizing element in a first position prior to the packer being run into the well to store the potential energy and release the energizing element downhole in the well to release at least some of the potential energy at the predetermined position to radially expand the energizing element and establish contact between the sealing layer and a wall enclosing the packer.

44. (New) The seal element of claim 43, in which the energizing element comprises a metallic substrate.

45. (New) The seal element of claim 43, in which the energizing element comprises a composite material.

46. (New) The seal element of claim 43, wherein the mechanism comprises a pin.

47. (New) The seal element of claim 43, in which the energizing element comprises a spring.

48. (New) The seal element of claim 43, further comprising a support sleeve disposed around the energizing element.

49. (New) A method usable with a well comprising:
storing potential energy in a seal element of a packer before deploying the packer downhole in the well;
after the storing, running the packer into the well;
positioning the packer at a position at which a seal is to be formed in an annulus of the well;
setting the packer by releasing at least some of the potential energy to form a seal between the packer and a wall surrounding the packer; and
maintaining the seal using at least some of the potential energy remaining in the potential energy stored in the seal element.

50. (New) The method of claim 49, in which the storing is performed by at least deforming an elastic substrate of the seal element.